



READING BLUE COAT

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

The School's Commitment

Reading Blue Coat School (RBC) is fully committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. It aims to provide a warm, nurturing, and safe environment, where pupils feel secure and supported. All members of the School community are asked to take responsibility for safeguarding, recognising the right of all children to grow up without fear of abuse and harm. The leadership of the School will follow its duty to protect children unflinchingly. All staff are asked to read and understand this policy, and to act on it whenever necessary. Through working together and taking a positive, proactive approach to safeguarding, the School may provide great reassurance to pupils and their families.

This policy sets out the School's commitment in practical terms, showing clearly and simply how it is implemented day-to-day.

The School's commitment is fundamentally defined by statutory guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (2020), and all aspects of that guidance are in force within the School.

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Contacts

The key safeguarding contacts for Reading Blue Coat School are as follows:

Safeguarding Team

Name	Role	Other roles	Contact
Guy Williams	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Deputy Head, Pastoral	gjw@rbcs.org.uk Ext. 860
Claire Dance	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Director of Lower School	cd@rbcs.org.uk Ext. 887
Scott Yates	DDSL	Director of Middle School	sy@rbcs.org.uk Ext. 839
George Morton	DDSL	Director of Sixth Form	gem@rbcs.org.uk Ext. 882
Lisa Bennett	DDSL	Teacher of Religious Studies	ljb@rbcs.org.uk Ext. 844

Members of the Safeguarding Team can be reached through calling the School switchboard (0118 944 1005) and asking for a connection. Phone extension numbers are given in the table above. The Safeguarding Team can also be contacted via the Pastoral Secretary in the Messer Building (Maria Illingworth: mci@rbcs.org.uk).

Senior Contacts

Name	Role	Contact
Pete Thomas	Headmaster	hm@rbcs.org.uk
Ed Trelinski	Second Master	etr@rbcs.org.uk
Peter Bertram	Chair of Governors	chair@rbcs.org.uk
Charlotte Green	Safeguarding Governor	safeguarding@rbcs.org.uk

Contact with Governors may also be facilitated through the Headmaster's Secretary.

External Contacts

Name	Contact
Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership: Wokingham	triage@wokingham.gov.uk tel. 0118 908 8002 – (out of hours: 01344 786 543)
Thames Valley Police	https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/ tel. 101
NSPCC 24-hour helpline	Tel. 0808 800 5000
Childline	https://www.childline.org.uk/ tel. 0800 1111
Wokingham LADO	lado@wokingham.gov.uk tel. 0118 974 61 41

Introduction: Definitions, Scope, and the School's Approach

The definitions of safeguarding and child protection (CP) may be taken as follows:

“Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children's health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.” (KCSIE, 2019).

“Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. It refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. Effective child protection is essential as part of wider work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. However, all agencies and individuals should aim to proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of children so that the need for action to protect children from harm is reduced.” (*Wokingham model policy, 2018*)

RBC staff are expected to understand what safeguarding and CP look like in practice, recognising topical issues and possible signs of abuse (see Section 5). Regular training and updates will keep track of the fast-changing nature of new and evolving safeguarding issues. Where pupil welfare matters are borderline as ‘safeguarding’ issues, staff will be proactive in consulting the RBC Safeguarding Team.

The School’s aim is to implement this policy, to ensure that it consistently pursues the best interests and safety of children. The policy applies to all pupils at RBC, whether in term or in the holidays, onsite or away on trips or at home, and to all other children who are taking part in activities on School premises. The policy should be followed by all members of staff, governors, and other volunteers. The School recognises its responsibilities and is committed to its duties as set out by statutory guidance, and this policy will be kept updated accordingly.

External childcare providers and activity organisers may make use of School premises according to their own safeguarding policies, and these will be vetted for suitability by (one or more of): the Bursar, Director of HR, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

The RBC approach to safeguarding is to promote a proactive culture of vigilance and early intervention, to ensure that emerging issues are recognised and dealt with swiftly. This is a collective effort and the School promotes the message: “**safeguarding is everybody’s responsibility**”. To be effective, each professional and organisation should play their full part within a child-centred approach. This requires understanding the needs and views of children; careful listening to the voice of the child is at the heart of what we do. Every complaint or concern will be taken seriously. Where it is necessary to make referrals or work with external agencies, this will be instigated rapidly, and the general approach at RBC is to take the best advice from local experts.

We follow the [procedures of the Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership](#) (as set out in the pan Berkshire procedures manual), of which our Local Authority (Wokingham) is a member. Additionally, we work closely with any other safeguarding partnerships where our pupils are resident, such as Oxfordshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Bracknell Forest, *etc.* In all work with external agencies, RBC staff will ensure that all parties communicate effectively, following appropriate procedures.

Signs of Abuse and Safeguarding Issues

Staff are expected to be able to identify types of abuse and signs of abuse, as well as having a good general understanding of current safeguarding issues.

“Child abuse happens when a person – adult or child – harms a child. It can be physical, sexual, or emotional, but can also involve a lack of love, care, and attention. Children who suffer abuse may struggle to find the words to speak out, so it’s vital that anyone working with children or young people is vigilant for the signs of abuse.” (*NSPCC, 2018*)

If staff are uncertain whether a matter constitutes abuse, they should consult the Safeguarding Team. There are four main types of abuse:

- Physical – causing physical injury or harm. This may involve hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning, *etc.* Injuries may be visible, although pupils may conceal them under clothing, makeup. Harm may also be caused by an adult inducing illness in a child.
- Emotional – attacking a child’s sense of security, self-worth, and relationships. This may include ridicule, conveying a sense of worthlessness, setting unreasonable expectations, highly critical remarks, or depriving children of freedom and expression. Emotional abuse can engender a sense of fear and anxiety. It often goes hand in hand with other forms of abuse.
- Neglect – failing to meet basic needs. This could include depriving a child of nutrition, suitable clothing, sleep, adult supervision, emotional affirmation. Failing to provide suitable medical care may also constitute neglect.
- Sexual – forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. This could include physical sexual assault, such as penetrative acts, or less violent acts such as masturbation or touching. This may also include non-physical acts, such as asking a child to produce or view sexual images. Children may or may not be aware of or understand what is happening as a part of sexual abuse. Children may also feel that they have consented to the activity. Sexual abuse often takes place online or is preceded by online grooming. It is not exclusively perpetrated by adult males; women and young people may also perpetrate sexual abuse.

The different forms of abuse may overlap or be combined. They can take place either partially or wholly online, or in person. Abusive behaviours and relationships can change over time.

Abuse may manifest itself in different ways and appear differently in different children. It is important to keep an open mind about possible causes for perceived symptoms of abuse. Abuse may impact on both physical and mental health, and may exacerbate problems that were already present.

Possible signs of abuse occurring may include:

- Disclosure from the pupil that they have been abused
- Comments or questions from the pupil which indicate this possibility
- Injuries
- A pattern of injuries or other signs of harm
- Sudden changes in behaviour
- Sudden changes in academic work or change of subjects
- Apparent avoidance of certain members of staff or pupils
- Neglected appearance
- Reluctance to return home or spend time with family members
- Emotional withdrawal
- Shying away from touch or movements
- Weight loss or gain

Such lists are not exhaustive, and abuse may still be occurring without these indicators.

It is also of critical importance that staff recognise the additional risks relating to pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). These risks include: staff misinterpreting or assuming that signs of abuse (such as marks or injury) may be explained by a disability, children being socially isolated, SEND pupils being disproportionately affected by bullying without necessarily communicating this fact, and communication barriers. RBC ensures that the SEND coordinator attends all Section meetings with the DSL and relevant DDSL, so that there is a coordinated approach to mitigating safeguarding risks to SEND pupils.

It is also important for staff to be aware of specific safeguarding issues, which may further threaten the well-being of children. Some of these may occur within the family, but staff should also understand that risks may be posed by extra-familial contexts (e.g. in the community). All these matters are discussed, with further resources in linked documents, in Part One and in Annex A of *KCSIE, 2020*. If RBC staff have concerns that a child is exposed to any of the matters here, they should contact the DSL immediately.

As a summary, key **specific safeguarding issues** include the following:

(Anti-)Radicalisation and Prevent: At RBC, we follow the statutory guidance (*Prevent, 2015*) to ensure staff can identify pupils at risk of radicalisation, support them, and work to build up resilience to such risks through promoting the Fundamental British Values of: democracy, the rule of law, mutual respect, and tolerance. We recognise the real threat of terrorism within the local community, but also the threat that such events may divide us and cause hostility between groups. RBC promotes a culture of vigilance, noting changes in attitude or behaviour among pupils. All staff are expected to understand the risk of radicalisation; the School will take advice and / or make referrals to the Channel programme where necessary.

Serious Violence, Youth and Gang Violence: The School realises that some pupils may be drawn into gangs where they could encounter violence or threats with potential serious consequences as part of the culture. A culture of vigilance and understanding of local issues are essential for safeguarding in this regard.

County Lines and Child Criminal Exploitation: This threat to children is geographically widespread and exploitation is a feature of county lines activity: drug networks that groom young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. The signs of potential involvement are absence episodes when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs. Concerns should be reported to the DSL, who will consider accessing the National Referral Mechanism. Further information is found in the Children's Society report *Counting Lives (2019)*. Staff must be aware of the issue, acknowledging that Berkshire is a top destination for county lines (*Berkshire Live, 2019*). There have been recent drug arrests in the local area. Children may also be at risk of criminal exploitation (CCE) from other forms, organisation, or individuals outside of county lines gangs.

Children Missing Education: The School will inform the Local Authority of any pupil who fails to attend regularly without adequate explanation, or who has been absent without permission for a period of 10 school days or more. The School recognises absence as a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and will follow up all concerns. Children who join and leave at non-standard transition times will be checked-off with the school they are leaving or joining to ensure continuity of education. These transitions will be monitored by the Director of Admissions and the DSL. During school transitions, the DSL will also ensure any safeguarding concerns regarding pupils are received from or passed to the other school. As a further measure to ensure pupil contact and attendance, the School will hold two contact numbers for each individual pupil and make enquiries where these numbers are not held.

So-Called Honour Based Abuse (HBA): This encompasses crimes or incidents motivated by the desire to protect the honour of a family or a community, including practices such as FGM, forced marriage, and breast ironing. Specifically, on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): staff must be alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of or having suffered from FGM. There is a mandatory reporting duty on teachers to personally report any cases they are aware of to the police. Specifically, on Forced Marriage: it occurs where a marriage is entered into without the full and free consent of both parties, and may involve violence,

intimidation, or coercion. The School's approach is governed by the guidance of the UK Forced Marriage Unit.

Domestic Abuse: is: "any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass but is not limited to: psychological; physical; sexual; financial; and emotional." (KCSIE, 2020). The School recognises the threat posed to the well-being of children by exposure to domestic abuse; where necessary, it will participate in Operation Encompass (or other external support) to ensure that issues are addressed swiftly and effectively.

Child Sexual Exploitation: (CSE) involves exploitative situations and relationships where young people receive something (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, gifts, money or simply affection) for engaging in sexual activities. Sexual exploitation can take many forms, ranging from a seemingly 'consensual' relationship to serious organised crime. What marks out exploitation is an imbalance of power. The perpetrator holds power over the victim, which increases as the exploitative relationship develops. CSE involves varying degrees of coercion, including unwanted pressure from peers to have sex, sexual bullying, cyberbullying, and grooming. However, it is also important to recognise that some young people who are being exploited do not exhibit any external signs of this abuse.

Peer on Peer Abuse: Otherwise known as child on child abuse, this can take many forms. Acts of abuse among children may be consistent with a pattern of bullying, such as violence or intimidation, which is further covered in the School's Anti-Bullying policy. Abuse may also take place as part of hazing or initiation ceremonies (e.g. into sports teams). Pupils are also at risk specifically of sexual abuse from their peer group. One aspect of this is sexual violence, which relates to matters governed by the *Sexual Offences Act, 2003*, such as rape or sexual assault. Children can and sometimes do abuse their peers in this way. Another aspect is sexual harassment, unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. It could include comments, taunting, physical behaviour, or be online. There is also the specific (since 2019 criminal) offence of upskirting, which is taking pictures under clothing without knowledge or permission.

Youth Produced Sexual Imagery: Although it is common for young people to share images of themselves or others as part of their social lives online, there are risks associated with the nature of the content, particularly if it is of a sexual nature. It is illegal to create or share sexual images or videos of under 18's. If staff become aware of such imagery, they should notify the DSL immediately. They should not ask to see imagery but should confiscate any devices they know to hold it. The DSL will follow the advice of *Sexting in Schools and Colleges, 2016*.

Other Issues: In addition to the issues summarised here, *KCSIE, 2020*, Annex A further identifies the following safeguarding concerns: children in the court system, children with family members in prison, homelessness. These specific issues may affect RBC pupils from time to time, and so it is imperative that RBC staff understand these matters and how they can impact children.

Online Risk and Safeguarding

So much of the lives of young people are conducted online and all staff must be aware of both the opportunities and risks that this presents. Many safeguarding issues relate to interactions or relationships formed or continued online. Therefore, the RBC Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy should also be read in conjunction with the Internet Safety Policy and it is important for all staff and pupils to receive regular updates regarding e-safety. For

further advice, all members of the community can access 'Thinkuknow' online. The School has also bought into the 'Safer Schools' app via our insurers (Zurich), which is available to staff, pupils, and parents as a constantly updated resource.

There are many ways in which online activity feeds into safeguarding issues, with some examples including:

- Sexual harassment through messages / images
- 'Catfishing' for sexual images
- Online blackmail
- Grooming a potential victim of abuse through games, chat, social media
- Conducting exploitation or gang activity on smartphones
- Exposure to age inappropriate content
- Access to online gambling
- Group bullying or emotional abuse on social media
- Videos / sites promoting harmful ideas (such as terrorism, pro-suicide)
- Giving away personal data, location, etc.

Staff are expected to speak honestly and openly with pupils about online risks and safeguarding, not creating false or hysterical warnings, but giving sound advice based on evidence and information. E-safety will also feature in the School's PSHE curriculum.

Personnel, Roles and Responsibilities

All staff, volunteers and governors have a duty to safeguard children. All members of the community, including pupils and parents, are encouraged to play their part in supporting a culture of safety and awareness. The RBC approach is to empower people with the desire, ability, and skills to make safeguarding a team effort. The strongest institutions for protecting and promoting children's well-being always build from the idea of collective effort.

Whole Staff Responsibilities

To further specify their duties, all staff, volunteers, and governors are expected to:

- Maintain broad familiarity with safeguarding issues and practices
- Annually, read and sign to accept the School's policy and *KCSIE* Part One (and Annex A for those working closely with children – i.e. teachers)
- Participate in any safeguarding training specified by the DSL
- Abide by all other policies relevant to the welfare and protection of children
- Be prepared to listen to children and pass on any concerns promptly, accurately

Specific Staff Responsibilities

The Safeguarding Team comprises the DSL and Deputies (see 3. Contacts). The DSL is also the Deputy Head Pastoral and has overall responsibility for safeguarding and discharging the School's duties in this respect. Other senior staff and governors also have roles to play, and these are outlined as follows.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

KCSIE specifies that schools must appoint a DSL with sufficient time, expertise, resources, and seniority to lead in this area. The Headmaster and governors will ensure that they make provision clearly for this in the job description of the DSL. Deputies are appointed to assist the DSL in carrying out duties. The DSL at RBC is Dr Guy Williams (Deputy Head, Pastoral).

The responsibilities and duties of the DSL are as follows:

- Act as first point of contact for reporting of safeguarding concerns
- Write and update policy and guidance, ensuring its successful implementation
- Monitor Government and Local Authority updates to legislation and guidance
- Act as a dedicated resource (knowledge base) for staff on safeguarding
- Lead the School's approach to online safety and other related areas to safeguarding
- Manage the Deputy DSLs and safeguarding workflows
- Submit, manage, and support referrals of suspected abuse to local authorities
- Refer cases of risk of radicalisation to the Channel programme
- Report suspected criminal activity to the police
- Act as point of contact for external agencies dealing with safeguarding matters
- Liaise with the Headmaster and keep him / her updated on significant cases
- Work closely with staff whose jobs link to safeguarding matters (e.g. medical, SENCO)
- Oversee statutory and other safeguarding training for staff
- Ensure that all staff, volunteers, governors read and sign to acknowledge the School's Safeguarding and CP policy annually, alongside *KCSIE* Part One (and Annex A for those working closely with children)
- Ensure that appropriate, secure, accurate records of safeguarding matters are kept
- Prepare annual safeguarding reports to governors; liaise with Safeguarding Governor
- Ensure the School's safeguarding policy and procedures are always inspection-ready
- Put in place and monitor visiting speaker protocols, policy, vetting of speakers
- Ensure that safeguarding work in the School complies with Data Protection regulations
- Share information appropriately, promptly, with external agencies / professionals
- Ensure prompt, secure transmission of safeguarding files to / from other schools for pupils joining or leaving RBC
- Promote a culture of listening to children and being responsive to their needs

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs)

The role of the DDSL is to deputise for the DSL where appropriate and to work on a team to manage cases as required. Although a DDSL may deputise for the DSL, *responsibility* for safeguarding cannot be delegated. In addition to supporting and deputising for the duties above, a DDSL also plays an important role in a continual, pro-active discussion of pupils who are a welfare concern, in consultation with the DSL, Heads of Year, and other relevant staff.

At RBC, the School's Directors of Section act as DDSLs, so they have an important role to play in safeguarding, having a detailed knowledge of the individual pupils within their section. The dynamic between the DSL and DDSL is a key feature and strength of the RBC system.

The Headmaster

The Headmaster will work alongside the Governing Body and SLT to ensure that RBC discharges all its duties and responsibilities, as set out in *KCSIE, 2020*, Part Two.

The Headmaster holds routine meetings with the DSL, and they will meet more frequently when significant safeguarding matters arise.

Allegations against members of staff, volunteers, or governors are to be reported to the Headmaster (not the DSL) and so he / she has overall responsibility for managing safeguarding matters that concern staff (see further Section 13 below). The Headmaster

may choose to ask the DSL to support or deputise for managing certain cases involving staff, should he / she think it appropriate.

The Governors

The governors will have oversight of safeguarding, ensuring that the School is fully compliant with all statutory guidance, and that it publishes and implements an appropriate policy each year. All governors will receive and read an annual safeguarding report, which will be presented to the Full Governing Board by the DSL.

The governors will provide a Safeguarding Governor with specific responsibility to oversee this aspect of School practice, further scrutinise safeguarding matters, and act as a liaison between the DSL and the Board of Governors. The Safeguarding Governor will review the School's safeguarding policy (and any interim updates), and work with the DSL to ensure that policy is suitable for adoption and publication by the School.

The Chair of Governors will ensure the overall effectiveness of the governors in providing oversight of safeguarding matters at RBC. Should there be concerns about the conduct of or allegations against the Headmaster, these should be reported directly to the Chair of Governors. If there are concerns about members of staff, volunteers, or governors, and the Headmaster is unavailable, then such concerns should be directed to the Chair of Governors.

Identifying Issues, Listening to Pupils and Reporting Concerns

The School promotes a proactive culture in safeguarding and child welfare matters, especially where there is a possibility that a child or young person may be at risk of significant harm. The School takes an open and accepting attitude towards children as part of its responsibility for pastoral care. The School hopes that parents and pupils will feel free to talk about any concerns and will see the School as a safe place, if there are any difficulties at home. Staff will feel supported in safeguarding and feel able to raise concerns.

Children's worries and fears will be taken seriously if they seek help from a member of staff. This may lead to a referral to an external agency, to safeguard a child's welfare. Any suspicion that a pupil is at risk of significant harm through abuse will initiate a formal notification to the relevant authorities. The same meaning of 'significant harm' is applied in this policy as in the *Children Act, 1989* in that:

- 'Harm' means ill-treatment or impairment of health or development, including impairment suffered from hearing or seeing the ill-treatment of another.
- 'Development' means physical, intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural development.
- 'Health' means physical or mental health and 'ill-treatment' includes sexual abuse and ill-treatment that is not physical.

It is important that all staff, volunteers, and governors recognise common indicators and types of abuse (as per Section 5, above), and accept their responsibilities to communicate concerns. There may be uncertain or ambiguous cases, where it is not immediately clear whether a matter is a safeguarding concern – in such cases, the approach at RBC is: *if in doubt, pass it on*. The Safeguarding Team are always happy to discuss concerns and would rather have more information than less. Where there is a case of suspected abuse, this must always be passed on immediately to the DSL.

Concerns about a child may arise from an adult's or peer's observation of them, noting a change in appearance, mood, or behaviour. However, concerns may also arise from a child making a direct disclosure. For such cases, here is practical advice for staff hearing disclosures:

- Stop any distractions or other activities, and listen in a focused way
- Assure the pupil that you are happy to listen and to help
- Listen carefully and with an open mind; give the child time and do not fill silences
- Limit questions to what is necessary and keep them factual (e.g. what day, time?)
- Never ask leading questions, which may compromise investigations
- Do not attempt to investigate the matter yourself
- Do not promise confidentiality and clarify that abuse must always be reported
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in confiding in you
- Produce a simple, accurate written record of the conversation as soon as possible
 - Use the child's own words and base it on what you have heard
 - Keep to the facts; try to include everything, check for gaps, errors
 - Sometimes, the child will feel able to help you produce the summary
 - Do not offer your own opinions or interpretations
 - Provide the date, time, and signature on your record
- Communicate the matter to the DSL immediately: in person, on the phone, via email
 - If the DSL is unavailable, contact a DDSL
 - The Pastoral Secretary (in Messer Building) can help to contact the DSL
 - Communication in person / on the phone is preferable, as it is immediate
 - Mark all safeguarding disclosure emails as urgent, address the DSL, and copy-in the relevant Director of Section (DDSL)

Any supplementary information or evidence you have (e.g. images, messages) should also be passed on promptly, along with the concern report. Do not retain copies of these items.

If the child is in a vulnerable state or at risk at the time in any way, always ensure their immediate safety and well-being, asking other RBC staff for assistance where necessary. There are respite spaces available within the School and a pastoral triage rota, which is managed by Pastoral Secretary.

At this point, there would be no further action to take, unless requested by the DSL.

Referrals

When receiving reported concerns about the welfare of a child, the DSL and / or DDSLs will consider carefully all the relevant information to decide an appropriate course of action. Specifically, a referral to children's services might be made considering the following factors:

- The nature and seriousness of the complaint
- Local thresholds, or advice from a 'no-names' conversation with professionals
- The best interests of the child
- The child's wishes and feelings

If the decision is made not to refer a matter, the situation will still be kept under constant review and a referral might be made later, particularly if circumstances do not improve or deteriorate.

In making a referral, the DSL will telephone the relevant Local Authority's children's services and talk through the specifics of the concern, then following-up in writing. Confirmation of a decision or action should be received from the Local Authority within one working day; if this

does not come through then the DSL will follow up again by telephone. If a referral is made by a DDSL or other member of staff, they should inform the DSL as soon as possible. The DSL will also continue to follow-up on open cases, sharing information, or alerting children's services if the situation seems unchanged or worse.

Referrals may also be made by the DSL to the Channel programme, for concerns about radicalisation. Following the same principles to the ones above, he / she will carefully consider the full range of information about the child and the circumstances of the concern, with cases kept under constant review.

Communication, Information Sharing and Record Keeping

Safeguarding matters are by their nature sensitive and often complex. There are important demands on the one hand for confidentiality, data security, and privacy (to protect the child) and on the other hand for raising awareness and sharing information (to enable parties to support children effectively). The DSL will follow the law, advice from external agencies, and will form careful judgements as to the way safeguarding information is managed and shared.

General principles for information sharing – the School will cooperate with external agencies and share information appropriately, to ensure the best possible support for children. Requests for information will be dealt with promptly and accurately. Similarly, the cooperation with external agencies requires that the DSL / DDSL is proactive in seeking relevant information held by, for example, children's services or the police.

All other considerations for sharing information will be secondary to the child's best interests and safety. However, it remains important to manage data and it should not be shared indiscriminately. The following principles will help in decision-making:

- Be open and honest about what is shared, why, how, and when
- It is best to share information with consent, but sometimes necessary without
- Consider the security of the means of communication and storage by the recipient
- In difficult cases, take expert advice on the appropriateness of information sharing
- Keep a record of decisions to share information or not, and why they were made
- Follow the principles: necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely, secure

More detailed guidance may be found in the Government advice *Information Sharing, 2018*.

Informing parents – where possible, it is important to keep parents informed of safeguarding concerns regarding their children, as parents will play a key role in helping to safeguard the child. Cooperation and openness are always best working practices. The School's safeguarding policy and practice is transparent and published online, and parents are welcome to discuss any aspect of this policy with the Safeguarding Team.

Where a referral is made concerning a child, parents should be informed as soon as possible. However, parents will *not* be informed if they are alleged perpetrators of or accessories to abuse, or if there is specific advice from external agencies not to do so. Referrals do not require parental consent and will always be considered in terms of the child's best interests. Similarly, as a case progresses, further information will be shared with the parents (or not) according to the principles above.

Informing staff – staff have a legitimate interest in understanding the needs of the children they look after, for example giving them emotional support or avoiding triggers in lessons. However, these interests are balanced by fundamental considerations of privacy, data security, and the child's wishes. The extent to which RBC staff beyond the Safeguarding

Team are informed of safeguarding concerns will be judged on a case-by-case basis by the DSL. Wider dissemination of information will only be made where it is strictly necessary, beneficial to the child, and can be managed carefully.

Record keeping – sensitive safeguarding information will be stored on the system MyConcern, and sensitive documents received in hardcopy will be scanned and entered there, and / or attached to the pupil's paper file. MyConcern will be managed by the Pastoral Secretary and the Safeguarding Team. This will be used for logging actions, discussions, decisions (with their reasoning), and communication by RBC staff, as well as official documentation (such as referral forms). Information stored on MyConcern is not accessible to the wider staff body. Less sensitive information about lower-level or general pastoral concerns will be stored on the pupil's file on SIMs.

Training and Raising Awareness

Quality training and regular professional updates provide the cornerstone of effective safeguarding and child protection, and RBC maintains a strong commitment to providing training of the highest level.

All staff, volunteers and governors at RBC receive safeguarding training. Mandatory training is undertaken as a precursor to starting work, in the form of an EduCare course. Responsibility for providing safeguarding training will lie with the DSL and will also require cooperation with the HR Manager, the Deputy Head Staff, and the other members of the Safeguarding Team. Further, specific requirements for training include:

- 'Targeted' training for the DSL / DDSL with refreshers every two years
- 'Prevent' training is undertaken by the DSL and DDSLs
- For all staff, volunteers, and governors: annual update briefings or refresher training
- For teachers, full training every two years (due Sept 2022)
 - *NB teachers receive a brief update / refresher in the off year*
 - *The Headmaster participates in the same training as other teachers*
- For those joining part-way through a school year, a welcome meeting with the DSL

It is also a general expectation that members of the Safeguarding Team and other pastoral staff (such as Heads of Year) will undertake additional training or self-directed learning as part of the wider course of their professional development, to give them expertise in specific issues (e.g. online safety, preventing bullying, etc.), using this to enhance the overall knowledge-base of the School's pastoral care.

The HR department, liaising with the DSL and Pastoral Secretary, will keep records to ensure that all staff participate in statutory training.

As part of and alongside that training, all staff are expected to maintain familiarity with:

- Policies and systems within the School covering safeguarding, pupil behaviour, staff conduct, whistleblowing, and internet safety
- The School's response to children missing education
- The local early help process
- The referral process to children's services; statutory assessments (Section 17; 47)
- What to do if a child discloses that he / she is being abused

The DSL will be available to clarify any of these matters and answer questions. The DSL and DDSLs will also maintain an enhanced level of understanding, including:

- The processes for early help and statutory intervention, including local criteria
- Local Authority child protection cases conferences: how to contribute effectively
- Local contexts of safeguarding issues
- The specific needs of children, including those with SEND or young carers
- Data protection regulations and how they relate to safeguarding matters
- The Prevent duty and risks of radicalisation

The School will promote a culture of awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, across the staff body, but also among the pupils and the wider community. Pupils will be informed clearly and consistently of their ability to disclose and raise concerns, and how to do so. The School will provide a suitable PSHE curriculum for all pupils, which will enable them to understand and manage risks, and to keep themselves safe. This will include (but not be limited to) such topics as:

- E-safety
- Bullying
- Mental health
- Sex and relationships
- Equity and inclusion
- Substance abuse
- Crime

Recruitment and Induction

The School will, through its recruitment procedures, ensure that all staff, volunteers, and governors are suitable to work with children and young people. To enable this, they will be appropriately selected, screened, trained, and supervised. The School will implement safer recruitment practices, in accordance with its Recruitment, Selection and Disclosure policy. Senior staff are trained to ensure that safer recruitment questions are asked at employment interviews.

Recognising that individuals who might pose a risk to children may seek access to them through voluntary roles in schools, the School will employ the same level of checks for suitability on volunteers. Where a parent or other volunteer works on behalf of the School on a one-off basis (i.e. is not vetted), he / she will only do so under the direct supervision of staff.

On receiving an offer of employment, in addition to completing background checks, new members of staff will be required to complete safeguarding training, and to read and accept the School's Safeguarding and CP policy, Staff Code of Conduct, and *KCS/E* Part One (and for teachers Annex A). They will be expected to provide a prompt return of acknowledgement, in a timescale agreed with the HR department and / or the Pastoral Secretary.

Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers

All staff are advised to be circumspect and to avoid putting themselves in a situation which poses a risk to a child or risks giving rise to an allegation of abuse. Guidance is given to staff as to how to manage these risks in the Staff Code of Conduct. The points in this section of the policy apply to all staff, supply staff, volunteers, and governors.

The School will follow-up on all allegations swiftly, fairly, and in accordance with the law / guidance. Allegations might include committing an offence against a child, putting a child at

risk of harm, or behaving in such a way as to call into question their suitability to work with children. The School will follow the guidance given in Part Four of *KCSIE, 2020*.

Allegations against members of staff (including against the DSL or other senior members of staff) should be made direct to the Headmaster (without informing the member of staff). The Headmaster manages allegations against staff but, in his absence, the Chair of Governors should be contacted. If an allegation is made against the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors should be contacted direct (without informing the Headmaster). Contact information can be found above in Section 3 and the Headmaster's Secretary can assist in making contact.

Allegations will be referred immediately to the local LADO or (for serious matters) Police. The School will not investigate allegations unless specifically advised to do so by the authorities. Similarly, the staff subject of the allegation will not be informed until / unless the LADO advises. When referring concerns to the LADO, the Headmaster will participate in discussions as to the nature and management of the case. Discussions should be recorded in writing, leading to an agreed course of action, including any communications to the member of staff concerned and / or the parents of the child. These decisions may result in the School deciding to suspend a member of staff or putting in place other measures to manage risks. Suspension will not be automatically implemented and will only occur where there is no suitable alternative.

The School will report promptly to the DBS any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or student) whose services are no longer used for regulated activity and where the DBS referral criteria are met, that is, they have caused harm or posed a risk of harm to a child. Where a teacher has been dismissed, the School will consider whether a referral to the Teaching Regulation Agency is required, reading carefully the advice issued in *Teacher Misconduct, 2012* and the TRA website and, if necessary, taking specialist legal advice.

Bibliography and Recommended Resources

Government Guidance and Law

Statutory guidance: *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020)*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Statutory guidance: *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children-2>

Statutory guidance: *Prevent Duty Guidance (2015)*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>

Statutory guidance: *Disqualification under the Childcare Act (2006)*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disqualification-under-the-childcare-act-2006>

Guidance: *What to do if you are Worried a Child is Being Abused (2015)*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused--2>

Guidance: *Sexting in Schools and Colleges (2016)*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexting-in-schools-and-colleges>

Guidance: *Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers (2018)*:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf

TRA guidance collection: *Teacher Misconduct (2012)*:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/teacher-misconduct>
 UK Legislation: *Children Act (1989)*:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>
 UK Legislation: *Sexual Offences Act (2003)*:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>

Miscellaneous / Other

Wokingham, *Model Safeguarding Policy (2018)*:
<https://wsh.wokingham.gov.uk/leadership/policies/safeguarding-policy/>
 MyConcern public website:
<https://www.myconcern.co.uk/>
 NSPCC, *'What is Child Abuse?' (2018)*:
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/>
 News report, *Berkshire Live (2019)*:
<https://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/berkshire-top-destination-county-lines-16994246>
 Children's Society Report: *Counting Lives (2019)*:
<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/resources-and-publications/counting-lives-report>

Recommended Resources for RBC Staff

Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership:
<https://www.berkshirewestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/scp>
 EduCare (the School maintains a wide-ranging suite of safeguarding related courses):
<https://www.educare.co.uk/>
 The Children's Society: <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/>
 Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
 NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/> - includes useful guidance, *'When to Call the Police'*
 Thames Valley Police (includes news and briefings): <https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/>
 ThinkUKnow: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals/>
 Zurich safeguarding resources: <https://newsandviews.zurich.co.uk/risk-guides/safeguarding-risk-resource/>

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Annex: Summary of Changes in *KCSIE, 2020*

The main Government statutory guidance has been updated again for the school year beginning September 2020. The changes are fully summarised in Annex H of *KCSIE* and it is recommended that staff review the table there. As a summary, main points of change include:

- Links to supplementary Covid-19 guidance
- Connections drawn and explained between mental health issues and safeguarding
- More information provided regarding CCE and CSE
- Links to new data protection toolkit
- New requirements for Relationships, Sex, Health, Education are now mandatory
- Inclusion of domestic abuse as a specific safeguarding issue

Annex: Safeguarding Measures During Covid-19 Outbreak

The following policy annex is issued in response to the global Coronavirus pandemic of 2020. It will remain attached to the policy throughout the duration of the pandemic but may be subject to revision as circumstances change (in which case, the policy will be re-published).

The School implements UK Government interim guidance: *Coronavirus (COVID-19): safeguarding in schools, colleges, and other providers, 2020*. Reflecting the fast-changing nature of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Government's guidance will likely be subject to frequent change. This guidance is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers>

Further information and advice are also available on the Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership website here:

<https://www.berkshirewestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/scp/helping-you/coronavirus>

Context

From 20 March 2020 parents were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and for schools to remain open only for those children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response - who absolutely needed to attend. Schools and all childcare providers were asked to provide care for a limited number of children - children who were vulnerable, and children whose parents were critical to the COVID-19 response and could not be safely cared for at home. RBC closed accordingly, remaining open only to a limited number of pupils as specified above. The School then partially re-opened in the second half of the Summer term for pupils in Year 10 and Year 12, as per the Government's programme for the partial re-opening of schools. The Government since mandated that all schools should fully re-open from September onwards.

This annex therefore is drafted on the assumption that the School is physically open for the academic year 2020-2021, but that the risk of further outbreaks and temporary closures must be considered.

Continuity of Safeguarding Arrangements

During the period of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Schools' safeguarding policy remains fully in force and the arrangements are unchanged. The individuals responsible for safeguarding remain the same, as do the points of contact with external agencies. However, with the School re-opening, there will be additional challenges or issues that must be considered – these will be set out below. Contingency plans for further temporary closures must also be considered for safeguarding and these also will be set out below.

Additional Safeguarding Considerations for Schools Reopening

Risk Factors for Returning Pupils

Overall, the return of pupils to schools in the UK will likely be beneficial for safeguarding, providing structure and a safe place for pupils, and allowing professionals to monitor the welfare of children more closely. However, staff are asked to be mindful of additional challenges that may be faced by children returning from extended periods away from the School and primarily spent at home. These may include:

- Difficult arrangements / relationships at home, during lockdown
- Reported (national) increased incidence of domestic abuse
- Social isolation; pupils losing support networks
- Excessive and / or unsupervised access to online content
- Any unreported online abuse; new, inappropriate online relationships
- Loss of boundaries; loose or anarchic circumstances at home
- Bereavement (virus-related or otherwise)
- Family illness (virus-related or otherwise)
- School-related anxieties or school-refusal
- Academic anxieties or pressure

The key to identifying and responding to these issues is maintaining a culture of vigilance, openness, and of listening to pupils.

Additional Considerations for New Arrangements for School

RBC re-opens in September 2020 in accordance with Government guidance (*Guidance for Full Opening, 2020*). The new arrangements will be aimed at risk management, enabling education to continue with the lowest practical risk of infection / exposure to Covid-19 in the School. Consequently, RBC is implementing (temporary) changes to School timings, locations, groupings, and means of communication. While operating in new circumstances, RBC staff are asked to be mindful of the additional (temporary) considerations for safeguarding, as follows:

- Pupil adherence to health and safety arrangements; minimising infection risk
- Changes in behaviour and social dynamics in new School structures
- Maintaining effective communication despite bubbles / distancing measures
- Making time and space to listen to pupils under restrictive movement / space
- Promoting e-safety in a context of increased digital learning technology
- Need to monitor and support pupils shielding, unable to return
- Staff protecting themselves from infection risk while dealing with pupils' needs

Contingency for Further School Closures

It is hoped that the School will remain open indefinitely after return in September 2020. However, with the risk of fresh outbreaks, contingency plans must be made for further closures. Such closure could be brief or protracted. In such circumstances, the School will revert to (an updated version of) the policy Annex published with the initial closures in March 2020 (thus re-issuing this policy). That annex would include:

- Guidance for staff in remote learning, live online lessons
- Importance of vigilance for the welfare of children confined at home
- Measures to support vulnerable / at risk children
- Registration of pupils attending as vulnerable or as key worker children
- Availability and communication with the Safeguarding Team